

## WINDOWS 10 PREVIEW

First let me explain this is an evaluation version of Windows 10 and is somewhat limited in its capabilities and is a little unstable in some circumstances! Microsoft made this available with the understanding that your computer can (and will) report back to Microsoft on how you use the program and any problems you encounter. On the upside there is a comprehensive assistance forum and Microsoft technicians are available to help (for free!).

Anyone can go to the website and download a free version but first let me quote the warning given by Microsoft:

QUOTE

### Download and install the preview only if you:

- Want to try out software that's still in development and like sharing your opinion about it.
- Don't mind lots of updates or a UI design that might change significantly over time.
- Really know your way around a PC and feel comfortable troubleshooting problems, backing up data, formatting a hard drive, installing an operating system from scratch, or restoring your old one if necessary.
- Know what an ISO file is and how to use it.
- Aren't installing it on your everyday computer.

We're not kidding about the expert thing. **So if you think BIOS is a new plant-based fuel**, Tech Preview may not be right for you.

UNQUOTE

If this doesn't scare you feel free to visit the Microsoft web site and download the trial at: [insider.windows.com](http://insider.windows.com)

For your information I did a clean install on a new SSD and reinstalled several programs I wanted to test with Windows 10. I just use this SSD for Windows 10 testing and have another drive which has Windows 8.1 update and all the software I normally use available to swap in whenever I need to do so. On this laptop it is just a 5 minute task to change drives and it allows me to play with Windows 10 without being overly concerned about crashing (which has happened) or other problems.

As everyone knows Windows 8 was not received well by a lot of people, it was a radical change from Windows 7 and its predecessors in that there was no start menu, it had a "charms bar," tiles scattered across the screen and generally confusing to many people. Windows 8.1 was a slight improvement and the availability of a "start button" from third party vendors helped.

So what is Windows 10 like? Microsoft have returned to their "Windows everywhere" strategy, the OS will run on a wider range of devices than any other, from tiny gadgets, smartphones all the way up to desktop machines. The OS can be tailored to the device being used, touchscreen features for touchscreen devices and traditional

desktop visuals for devices that come with a mouse and keyboard. This is in stark contrast to Apple's use of separate operating systems for different applications, OS X for desktops and Laptops and iOS for tablets and smartphones. This helps consumers in that only one system needs to be mastered no matter what the device plus it is a benefit to developers who need only to write an application once and have it run on a range of devices.

However I think the real targets for this are what software merchants call "enterprise users". These are the numerous businesses currently using Windows 7 and the considerable number still using Windows XP and getting them to upgrade to Windows 10 which has the familiarity of 7 and XP. Many companies avoided moving to Windows 8 due to the radical changes but with Windows 10 Microsoft aims to create an immediate familiar experience. This means some of the staples of 7, including the start menu has made a welcome return but it also means Windows 10 is backwards compatible with the programs you are running now.

The new start menu looks like a hybrid of Windows 7 and 8. All the familiar items from Windows 7 are there including "All Programs" (called All Apps to appease tablet and smartphone users!). You can add items to the "Start Metro Tiles" as they are known, as shortcuts. The menu is highly customizable; you can change the tile size, remove or add tiles, change the whole appearance and make it larger or smaller. The task bar is still available and a new feature the "task view" has been added to the task bar and it can show all your running programs on multiple desktops.

These are all comparatively small tweaks but once you start putting them all together version 10 becomes a lot more user friendly the chief criticism of Windows 8. The real test is how Windows 10 performs on the vast array of devices it is being designed for, everything from touch screen phones to full desktop systems.

With this in mind Microsoft has introduced a new feature called "Continuum". This enables Win10 to change its mode when moving from touch screen devices (phones, tablets etc.) to the traditional mouse and keyboard scenario and also for convertible devices such as Microsoft Surface and Lenovo Yoga units. Using Continuum gives you an appropriate view for a touchscreen (including full-screen apps and a larger Start screen ) but when you attach a keyboard and mouse you get the traditional desktop, Start Menu and taskbar. I have seen a video of this and it certainly looks promising and appears to work as described.

For users of touch screen devices the charms bar will still be available by using a right swipe. Actually the first build of Windows 10 I installed (9841) had the charms bar available (using the Windows key+C shortcut) but this was discontinued in subsequent releases as this machine does not have a touch screen.

## **Performance.**

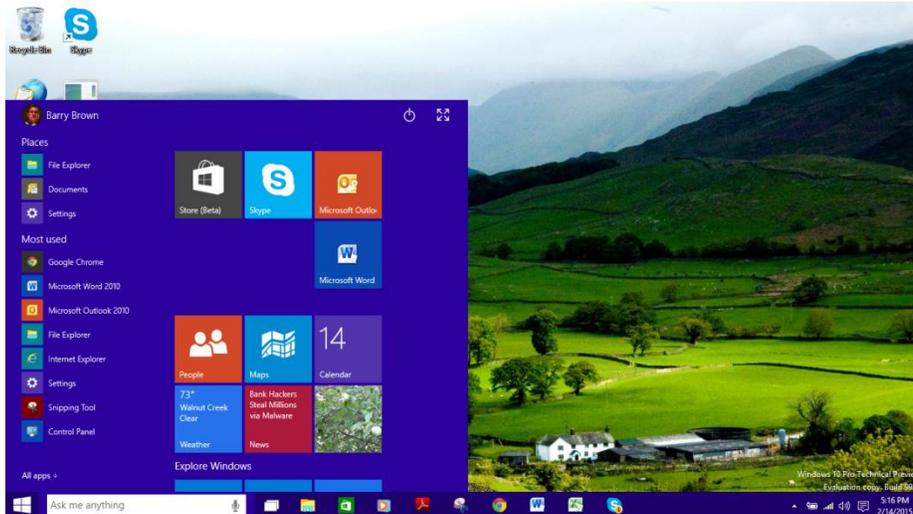
Despite its Technical Preview status Win10 is fast, boot times are impressive and traditional software (now called apps, I keep forgetting that!) load without any problems.

I think the biggest innovations in Windows 10 Technical Preview so far can be described as:

- Modern Start Menu
- New Home
- Notification Tray

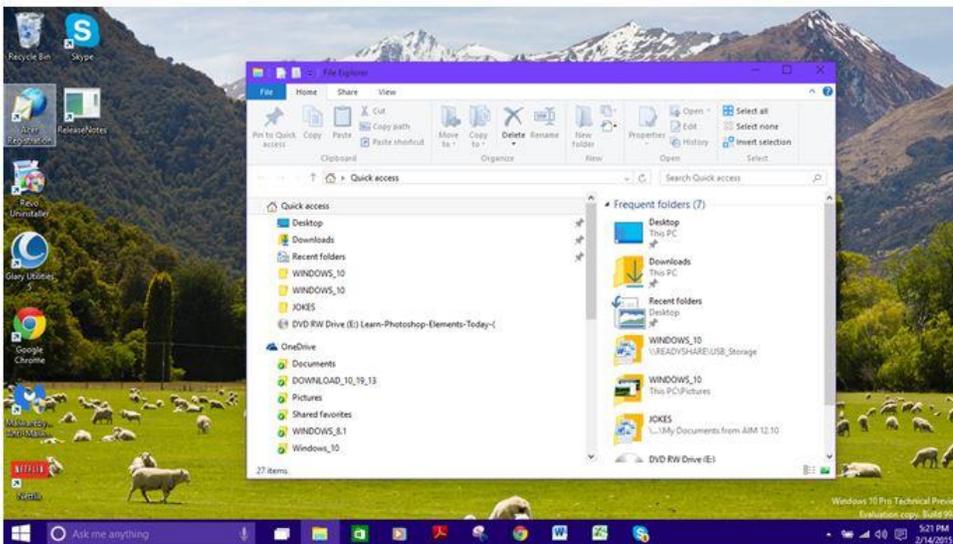
- Virtual Desktops
- Consistency
- Updated Command Prompt

## Start Menu



Two years after forcing the Metro Start screen on desktop users that interact with mouse and keyboard devices Microsoft has finally given in. Win10 will boot into a traditional desktop that has the Start menu in its familiar position. Also give Microsoft a big “attaboy” for cleverly integrating tiles into this. Another new feature is “Cortana” a voice and text search engine. This is still under development and Microsoft has promised this will be a very user friendly feature incorporating Bing search engine.

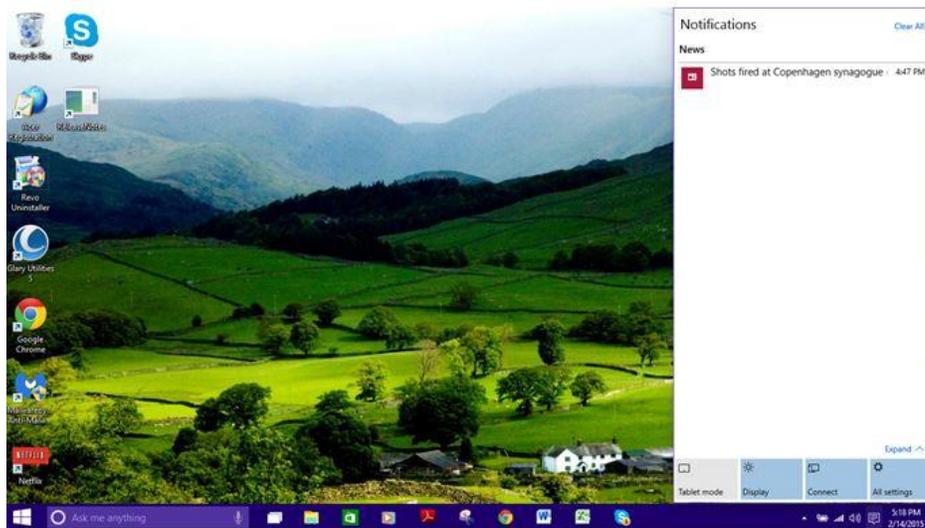
## New Home



The Win10 File Explorer defaults to a new tab labeled Home. Unlike earlier versions where opening My Computer would show the PC’s local storage and network the new File Explorer (on the task bar) opens a new

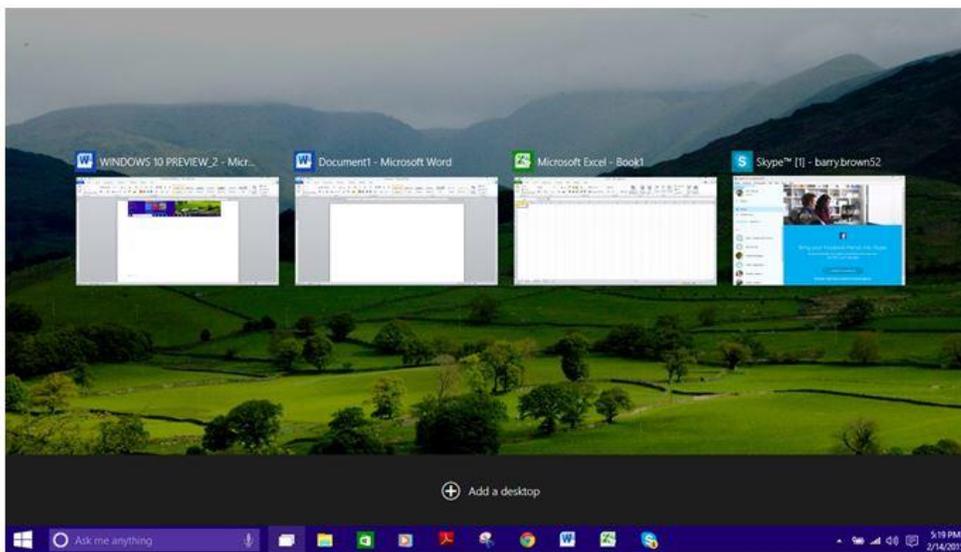
view called Home which is divided into Frequent folders and Recent files. The left-hand menu lists “This PC” option for managing storage locations and One Drive cloud storage service.

### Notification Tray



The notification button has been added to the bottom right of the task bar and is a very limited in the present build but a much cleaner interface and action is promised.

### Virtual Desktops



If you have several programs running at the same time you can organize them under several virtual workspaces with a feature called “Task View” which is activated through the task bar. Clicking on the Task View Icon opens all the programs and allows you to manipulate them as needed. This is still being refined but it looks very promising.

## Consistency

Win10 has a more coherent desktop experience. Instead of forcing you to use the tiles you can also use the traditional popup program (or apps) list and you can switch between the desktop or tablet interface seamlessly. If you have a device such as a Surface tablet it will run in desktop mode when the keyboard is attached and switch to touch screen mode when the keyboard is detached.

## Updated Command Prompt

This will be of most interest to administrators where the command prompt has been taught lots of new tricks such as support for native text and wrapping lines plus the ability to paste text into the command prompt using the "Ctrl+V" key combination. There are a whole lot of other hotkeys for moving the cursor and selecting text etc. Check these out by bringing up the Properties dialog window.

The other big addition to Windows 10 is the introduction of "Cortana" a virtual intelligent assistant originally developed for the Windows phone 8.1 and it will be included in Windows 10.

Cortana's features include being able to set reminders, recognize natural voice without the user having to input a predefined series of commands, and answer questions using information from Bing (like current weather and traffic conditions, sports scores, and biographies). Windows 8.1's universal "Bing SmartSearch" features are incorporated into Cortana, which replaces the previous Bing Search app which is activated when a user presses the "Search" button on their device. Cortana also includes a music recognition service. At present it is still in the development stage but videos Microsoft has made available on the "Insider Hub" a couple of weeks ago looked interesting. I will have to reserve comments about this until a feasible version is released.



Another major update that Microsoft is promising is to Internet Explorer. Code named Spartan it is still in the development stage but at the end of January Microsoft officially introduced its next-generation browser. It's not clear whether Spartan will replace Internet Explorer, or run alongside it. It's also not clear at this point whether Spartan is running on an updated or next-generation

version of Internet Explorer's Trident rendering engine, or something completely different. Microsoft has indicated a preview version will be available to members of the Windows Insider group very shortly and hopefully I will be able to comment on it later.

## Conclusion

First we should remember the technical preview we have seen is not the final software by any stretch of the imagination. Microsoft has only confirmed the final format will have the start configuration very similar to what we see now and the system will be universal across all platforms. I think there will be many refinements to the core components and we will see a much slicker and user-friendly product than Windows 8.1.